

The Story of Audrey Munson—Intimate Secrets of Studio Life Revealed by the Most Perfect, Most Versatile, Most Famous of American Models, Whose Face and Figure Have Inspired Thousands of Masterpieces of Sculpture and Painting



Blum which forms the main Theatre in New York. A million persons admire this of his feminine figures, a striking example of her plastic versatility.



creasing burden of his years. He was seen every night there expensively gowned women and dapper men gather, and invariably his companion was one of the youngest and most charming of the city's professional beauties.

My little model friend was amused at his gallantries at first, but thought more seriously about them when, to her consternation, he proposed a dinner on a popular roof garden for that evening, a theatre party and a table for at one of the midnight cabarets. When she refused politely as she could, pleading another engagement, the old beau would not accept the dismissal.

"Oh, let us make this a business engagement—upon our part. I want you only to give me the joy of your company in public. I will add a hundred dollars to your earnings for the day, and when the cabaret closes I will drop you at your home."

There was more explanation, and the model decided 100 would fully pay for being seen abroad in the company of even so notorious a beau. The evening was a revelation to her. The dinner was the most elaborate she ever had enjoyed. In her simple evening gown, now in its second season, she made a quaint picture in the midst of women of the world whose gowns were the creation of famous modistes, or in contrast to sophisticated debutantes and matrons who were making their occasional visits to the "night life."

Her escort was proud of her. He saw with satisfaction the envious glances cast his way by younger men, whose companions were better acquainted with their surroundings and who took the courses of the dinner as a matter of course, but whose faces were without the freshness of a wholesome youth.

Their walk down the aisle of the theatre was something of a triumphal march for the man. Many in the audience knew him—for it was one of those entertainments known as "girl shows," where "men about town" make up a good part of the audience. These murmured their comments upon him and his companion.

It was becoming quite a bit of fun for the little model.

At the roof the sensations of the dinner were repeated. Friends of her escort came up to the table to be presented and to pass frank compliments upon her beauty and upon the good fortune of her cavalier. When the midnight cabaret entertainment was finished she was driven at once to her home, a modest boarding house, with a hundred-dollar bill in her purse—the most money she ever had seen at one time.

For many months this young woman was the companion of the old man one or two evenings every week—and each time he left her at her boarding house a new hundred-dollar bill rested in her bag. She no longer frequented the studios. She had brought her mother from an inland town to New York, and they kept a cosy little apartment. Her mother did not know the strange source of her daughter's income, but felt a justified confidence in her. She was never later in her homecomings on those mysterious nights when she went out in her evening gowns than a few minutes after 1—not late in New York, where evenings begin at 9 o'clock instead of the rural 7.

Another young woman took her place after a while as the favored companion of the elderly beau. He sought variety in his displays as well as youth. By this time, however, the former model, accustomed to furs, jewels and gowns as elaborate as any, was not without her own resources. She knew others who would value the opportunity to parade her. She had learned this was an established custom of ancient Beau Brummels who sought to retain the glamour of their past reputations.

Not all of them were as generous with hundred-dollar bills, but wisdom crowns upon the young girl who becomes known in festive places for her beauty. She had many tricks and knew well how to use them to her own best advantage.

One engagement for a dinner at 8 o'clock she kept at 9 instead, appearing out of breath after her host had waited the hour impatiently. When she was chided for being so late she explained that she had been called by a photographer, who wanted some poses of her in a hurry, and that she could not afford to disappoint him, as "I have to make a living, you know, and enough money to buy the clothes I must have to go out in evenings. And I must hurry back, too, as soon as we have finished our dinner—by 10 o'clock anyway—as the photographer wants to finish getting his poses to-night."

When her host demurred she exclaimed, "But I could not lose his friendship. He gives me much work as a model, and I could not afford to lose the money he pays me."

"How much do you earn as a model?" the man asked. "Oh, sometimes \$35 a week," she replied, with an eagerness which indicated that she was very grateful for such a munificent income, an eagerness well simulated despite the fact that she had long given up posing.

"Then never mind your photographer or any other artist. Just give me two or three evenings a week for three months and I'll give you \$200 a week besides a new dress occasionally. Is it a bargain?"

It was a bargain, of course. The girl had just used a trick she had learned soon after she had "graduated" out of the studios.

In the instances I have related these young women were harmlessly profiting by the vanity of the old men who were paying them so handsomely and requiring from them nothing more than to be presented with them in public where they would be seen and admired by the friends and acquaintances of their paymaster. These elderly bon vivants had in their day lived the gay night life of New York, but their growing infirmities had incapacitated them for full participation in the life they remembered with such fond recollections. Their personal vanity made them dread to have glances shot at them with the comment that they were getting old and were no longer a part of the gay life which the others still enjoyed.

But to be seen coming down the aisle of a theatre or at a midnight cabaret with a stunning young beauty two or three nights a week served to maintain the hollow



Miss Kay Laurell, the well-known model, who was tempted away from the studios to the fame and adventures of the beauty revues on New York's "Gay White Way."

hypocrisy of their pretended perpetual youth. This flattered their vanity, and they were willing to pay well for the services of a strikingly pretty young girl who would help them play their part.

Not all the men who frequent studios of artists who will permit them to be present while models are being employed are as frankly well meaning, even if ludicrous, as those described above.

A model whom I knew as Margaret was engaged by an artist whose atelier was in one of the fashionable studio buildings, which only the most prosperous could afford. I had often been asked by this artist to pose for him, but I had steadfastly refused. His works never had engaged much attention, and I knew that he was hardly anything more than a wealthy dilettante who posed as an artist merely as a masquerade for a freedom which otherwise he might have been criticised for. A studio, an easel, a palette and a painter's jacket compose the mask for many things which, without them, would be taboo. Margaret, however, needed employment, and decided to chase any dangers that might confront her.

The artist was doing a Diana. Margaret would have been quite satisfied with her treatment as a model were it not for the callers, men as well as women, who dropped in during the afternoons for a chat with the artist. He received these callers without thinking of his model, apparently forgetting that she might be embarrassed before others than her employer.

One of the frequenters of the studio was a man whose name was quite well known throughout the city as a spender of immense sums for his own pleasures. He was a spectacular person, addicted to jewels, which he wore in his cuff buttons, studs, vest buttons and rings. His business was importing choicest champagnes. His name was quite as well known in the most remote parts of the United States as in New York, his home.

This man was impressed by Margaret's beauty. He overwhelmed her with his compliments—compliments which she accepted at their face value, flattered a little at the attention paid her by one so notoriously a connoisseur of feminine charms. She was further excited when, after a few days of casual acquaintance fostered in the studio in the presence of the artist, he boldly proposed to her

that she leave her modest lodgings and take an apartment which he would provide and furnish for her and for the support of which he would give her an allowance of \$600 a week!

He would ask nothing more in return, he promised, than the privilege of escorting her to the theatre occasionally, a frequent dinner at an expensive cabaret and the pleasure of having her pose as hostess now and then to such friends as he might bring with him for a dinner prepared by the chef he would engage for her.

"I want my friends to think that you are in love with me. That is all. You will only have to appear as though you admire me when we are in public places or when I come to visit you, and I promise never to come unless accompanied by friends and never to remain beyond conventional hours. I am willing to pay the expense and give you \$600 a week besides just for that feeling of pride."

Margaret was about to accept. "It can mean no harm," she pleaded to me—there can be nothing wrong about it, just foolish on his part, not on mine—and \$600 is a lot of money every week. I can save a lot."

"But," I asked her, "how will it be when you have become accustomed to that lavish luxury and \$600 every week—what then? Will you want to give it up if he demands more?"

I knew that was his plan, but Margaret refused to believe me.

After a time the girl was suddenly faced by the man one day and told that at the end of the month he would no longer pay the expenses of her establishment or continue her personal allowance of \$600 a week. The girl burst into tears at the thought of giving up the warm luxuries she had come to enjoy and which had grown to be very dear to her. The thought of going back to work in the studio at 50 cents an hour seemed intolerable.

Then came the proposition which I knew would be given the girl as an alternative—and in tears she weakly fell into the trap, which I had warned her was being set for her.

It is because so many of the young women who promise to become popular among the great artists for their plastic beauty give way to these temptations to adopt careers in which there is less work and more luxury that there are so few who remain favorites with the better sculptors and painters. There are many artists whose names are honored around the world who will not engage a model just beginning to pose unless they can first learn something of her character and of what her ambitions may come to be when she has become accustomed to the freedom and conventionalities of the career she wants to adopt.

For many artists' models the work in the studio seems to be merely a preliminary step to something which pays better and gives greater independence. It is natural enough that the stage should offer her the greatest opportunities and the greatest rewards. If the experience and schooling of studio life has taught a young woman gracefulness of carriage and her charms of face and figure have spread outside the studios it is natural enough that some theatrical manager may offer them a place in his stage production.

A notable case of success of this sort was Kay Laurell. She started to pose in the studios about the same time I did. In London, Paris, the Riviera, Rome and other European capitals as well as in New York and San Francisco, many persons who know little of paintings or statues and give them little regard have admired those which reflect Miss Laurell's charms.

Miss Laurell came from Virginia to New York to seek that elysium which so many young women from the West and South expect to find in the great metropolis.

Shortly after this I often met Miss Laurell in the studios of artists for whom I occasionally posed. She was used to typify drama, Oriental hours and bacchantes. Her figure was rounded and well lined, warm in its impressions and well proportioned.

She was very pleasing in her deportment, as well as in her grace as a model. She became very popular. I used to hear her say that "some day she was going to have a real fur coat." That seemed to be her chief ambition. To-day I have no doubt she has more expensive fur coats than many a real heiress has dresses.

From the studios the fame of Miss Laurell's beauty spread to New York's Broadway—the "lane of lights," that is ever watchful for the newest and daintiest morsel of femininity. She was persuaded to the stage, where her form and her beauty of face won her more acclaim in a single night than her anonymous posing would in a score of years. The fur coats accumulated, and there came a limousine, with a chauffeur, and other luxuries to match them.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday)